

## Wages Are Important



# The Right Career

*Choosing the right career and negotiating an appropriate wage can make a huge difference in your life.*

If you want, you can combine home and family (or just have enough extra cash to hire your housework done), and choose a career with high wages, and make sure you're being paid what you are worth.

### *The Fable of Jane and Susan*

Here's a little fable. Jane grew up knowing that she wanted to be a mother. She thought she would marry a rich man and stay home to take care of her children. She didn't think she'd need an education or a career. She got married right out of high school to the man of her dreams and had a charming baby girl.

Time for a reality check. Like most married women with children in Utah, Jane needed to work to make ends meet. She got a job at the local discount store as a cashier and, after a while, earned the Utah average wage for that occupation—\$8 an hour. She had few benefits and no retirement plan. To make enough money, Jane had to work

40 hours a week—mostly when her husband was off work so he could take care of the baby. They couldn't afford child care. Even though she didn't see much of her husband, she grossed \$320 a week—before taxes and other deductions.

Susan went to high school with Jane. Susan grew up knowing that she wanted to have a family. But, she also realized that she would probably be working outside the home—like most mothers in Utah. She chose a high-paying career, finished college and went to work as a computer hardware engineer. She got great pay, had good benefits, and could count on a retirement income—when that day finally came. THEN she got married and had a bouncing baby boy.

Susan's employer valued her work skills and was willing to let Susan cut back her hours. She ended up working only 20 hours a week at the Utah

average wage for computer hardware engineers—\$29 an hour. So, while Jane was making \$320 working a grueling 40 hours each week on her feet all day, Susan worked only 20 hours a week and at the same time grossed \$1,160 a week—two-and-a-half times more than Jane for half the work. Who would you like to be?

### *You Get My Point*

I'm sure you get my point. Wages are important when choosing a career—especially if you plan on having a family or already have children.

Where can you find out how much a job pays? If you plan on staying in Utah, your first stop should be the Department of Workforce Services' (DWS) web site. Just go to <http://jobs.utah.gov/jsp/wi/utalmis/wageDefault.jsp>. Here you can look up entry and average wages for a vast array of occupations in our database. You can find wages for jobs in your own particular area. You can also print

out flyers that list occupations and their pay. Take the time look at wages as you plan your career.

### *The List*

The list at the right shows 20 of the highest-paying occupations in Utah. These occupations generally require graduation from college with at least a bachelor's degree. In many cases, additional training, certification, or professional licensing is also required. Besides formal training, some high-paying occupations require management responsibilities. The greatest numbers of high-paying jobs are found in the broad occupational categories of healthcare practitioners, management, business operations, and financial/professional/related.

### *Getting the Highest Wage Possible*

Just choosing a high-paying occupation won't guarantee you'll get the best wage possible. Linda Babcock, a Carnegie Mellon University economics professor says her study shows that by not negotiating their salaries, many women sacrifice more than half a million dollars by the end of their work career. It's up to you to negotiate your best salary. Men do it. It's just as appropriate for women.

Forbes Magazine offers some tips for women negotiating their salaries:

- Read everything you can about negotiating a salary.** Start at the library, go to the web, and use the helpful links below.
- Be prepared.** Calculate the salary you'd like and the bare minimum you'd be willing to accept. That high-to-low range will provide you with what experienced negotiators call a "zone of possible agreement."
- Tactfully avoid answering the question, "What is your current salary?"** Since women may not have negotiated their salary before, it may already be lower than their male counterparts. If a prospective employer bases a woman's salary on her current one, she'll still come out behind.

•**Ask what has been budgeted for the position and go from there.** The idea is to always have the employer make the first offer. If you must answer, be as vague as possible.

•**No matter what, never lie about your salary.**

•**Look for a new job.** It isn't fun, but if you get multiple offers, you can pit one company against another.

•**Research.** We've already given you the DWS resource for wage information. Use it! ([www.utah.gov/wi](http://www.utah.gov/wi); click on "Wages and Income")

•**If you're already working, keep your eye out for outside opportunities.** Larger raises tend to come from switching jobs and companies.

•**Role-play with a colleague to practice how negotiations might go.** Make sure you come up with as many scenarios as possible.

•**Negotiate collaboratively.** Say, "I have another job offer, but I'd like to stay here because I like working here. Can you match the offer?"

Finally, and probably most important, you must confront your fears. Because women are raised to be "nice," negotiating can be very scary. It feels like conflict, like making someone mad, like being selfish and those are all things girls are taught not to do. But that kind of thinking will ultimately hurt both you and your family.

Resources for negotiating a salary:

- <http://www.womendontask.com>
- [http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/ksgpress/update/winter2006/stories/q\\_a.htm](http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/ksgpress/update/winter2006/stories/q_a.htm)
- <http://www.careerjournal.com/salaryhiring/negotiate/20030805-miller.html>
- [http://www.womenwork.org/career/careercenter/Getting\\_Hired/salary.htm](http://www.womenwork.org/career/careercenter/Getting_Hired/salary.htm)

## 20 Highest-Paying Occupations In Utah

- Dentists, general
- Psychiatrists
- Pharmacists
- Engineering managers
- Lawyers
- Optometrists
- Mining and geological engineers
- Loading machine operators, underground mining
- Petroleum engineers
- Computer and information systems managers
- Chemical engineers
- Natural sciences managers
- Sales managers
- Marketing managers
- Atmospheric and space scientists
- Human resources managers
- Computer software engineers, systems software
- Computer and information scientists, research
- Financial managers
- Purchasing managers

